Five Times Face Stood up for Hannibal and One Time He Didn’t

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Summary

The title says it all!
Covers a fair few years and there are warnings for adult situations and reference to violence.
Written as part of the Hannibal and Face Yahoo Group's Secret Santa for Loves_Books who expressed a desire for an A-Team/Lewis Crossover. I am not a Lewis expert and so I apologise to everyone who reads this who is :) The crossover part is limited to Time Five.
“This fucking sucks, man. How long are these bozos gonna keep us locked up in here?”

Face raises an eyelid from where he’s stretched out in the only cot of the cell and regards the speaker coolly. “They’ll let us out when they think we’ve sobered up and chilled out enough and not before. So why don’t you cool your jets a little and stop making this worse than it already is?”

“Worse than it already is?” Raynor paces around until he’s right at Face’s shoulder. “I don’t know who that old guy thinks he is, fucking prancing around the damn base likes he owns it.”

Face has to push up onto his elbow for that, incredulous eyes raking all over the dishevelled Raynor. “The old guy? You mean Smith?”

“Incredulity etches itself deeper into Face’s expression and his eyes quickly skip around the rest of their motley group, each in various stages of their hangover, each watching him warily to see how this is going to pan out. “Well, if you think about it, we did skip off the base without permission.”

“We had permission.”

“We had permission.”

“Not for last night.”

Raynor is silent.

“And we had a fight with the locals.”

“That guy with the tats started it.”

“Burnt a bar down…”

“I swear that was the owner! He saw the fight as a chance to claim on his insurance for that shit-hole!”

“Maybe. But that’s not what the cops saw.”

“Yeah, and where does Mr Head-up-his-ass get off believing them and not us and throwing us in here for the fucking day?”

There’s a long silence as Face slowly straightens up. “Colonel Head-up-his-ass, actually.”

Raynor rolls his eyes, “Really? The fucking army will promote anyone these days if they lick enough butt. Says it all that he’s stuck here dishing out jail-time like he has the fucking right. Dick.”

“He’s here recovering from an injury, actually. Tore his rotator cuff in Kuwait.”

“Heavy bottle of liquor was it?”

“Heavy serviceman he pulled outta burning transport.” Face’s retort is laser sharp, “He’s a fucking Ranger you dick-head. Most decorated serving Ranger there is.”
Raynor’s expression morphs into a sneer, “Serving? Faceman, you haven’t a fucking clue. Colonel’s
don’t serve, they sit on their fat asses and order people like us around. You said he’s decorated?
Yeah – I’d like to know how many of his men have died for him to get his fancy medals and his
fancy promotions. People like him are the worst, people like him who just leech off the rest of us,
cosy up to the people in charge and then think they have the fucking right to discipline honest,
hard-working guys like us just for shooting off a bit of steam with the fucking pressure of it all!”

Face is on his feet so fast that Raynor and his hangover don’t really see him coming. They feel him
though, the hand around Raynor’s throat and the hard slam of the concrete wall into his back.

“He serves,” his voice is a cobra-hiss. “He leads the best fucking team of Rangers there is. Ten-man
squad, all of them decorated, all of them the fucking best at what they do, all of them out there,
together, doing the job, Smith included. He hasn’t cosied up to anyone in his life and of course he
has the right to lock us up, we were fucking morons last night. And you,” Raynor is slammed against
the wall one more time, “You’ve never worked hard in your fucking life and what steam do you
have to try and shoot off? You’re here trying to pass your basic math for the fourth fucking time, you
fucking loser! Hardly fucking Jarhead, is it?”

He pushes him away with a snarl and heads to the wall under the barred window, folding his arms
and breathing deeply as Raynor rubs at his throat and tries to formulate a good reply. A snarled,
“Fuck you!” is the best he can come up with and Face contents himself with flipping him the bird as
Raynor slides down the wall to sit on his ass and try not to look Face’s way.

There’s an awkward silence as the rest of the new recruits wonder at what they’ve just seen and who
they should be supporting and then a voice rings out from the opposite corner from where Raynor is
still crouched. “You seem to know a lot about Smith, Faceman…”

Face straightens up a little against the wall and scratches casually through his buzz-cut. “I’ve done
my research; the guy’s a legend. I’m gonna serve with him one day.”

There’s a scoff at that from Raynor and Face shoots furious eyes his way.

“How you gonna do that then, pretty boy? The old guy’s a Ranger and you are not.”

There’s a silence as Raynor tries his best to stand up to the glare coming at him across the cell and
then Face speaks again, voice low and tightly contained, but there’s a thread of worry in there as
well, if anyone in that room knew him well enough to hear it, “I will be.”

It signals the end of the conversation at any rate and silence falls once more as hangovers are nursed
and lessons considered. The sun creeps steadily across the afternoon sky and a wisp of Cuban cigar
smoke trails delicately in through the open window from outside.
“Come on Face, leave it will you? He’s just trying to get a rise out of us.” Carman takes Face’s arm and non-too-gently tugs him away from the grinning Marine and back to where the rest of the team are waiting for them at the start of Coyote run.

“This is supposed to be a bit of fun,” Med is on one knee in the mud, fastening his laces for the seventeenth time that morning, a sure sign of his own nerves. “Not the start of World War Three.”

“Yeah,” Quo’s calming tone is betrayed by the one finger he flips the Marines way, “And they know you’re our fastest asset, they’re playing you, trying to get you out of the game. Don’t fall for it.”

Face knows all this, but Deke and his boys are just so damn irritating – and smug, he’s itching to go over there and wipe the stupid smiles off their stupid faces with his fists.

“Hey,” suddenly his view is blocked by Med’s earnest face. “C’mere, Temp, turn around, come on, we need to talk tactics anyway, the boss needs us to win this convincingly.”

He allows himself to be drawn away, over to where Carman has the entire team in a huddle as they discuss rules and tactics and how they’re going to reassert Hannibal’s team as the best yet again.

“So, to reiterate,” Face tries not to sigh as Carman reiterates for at least the third time. “Only the first six to cross the line get points, we need to have as many of those positions as possible. Med, Quo, Face, Stubs and Moshi, you’re our best bets so you’ll have me, Swede, Slim and Crabs looking out for you.”

“What about me?” this is Jethro, his black eyes still glaring across the way to where Deke and the others are lounging in the sun. “You forget about me?”

Carman’s smile is nothing but predatory as he leans in, reminding Face that, for all his niceties, Carman can be a dirty son of a bitch when he wants to be. “No, Jeth, absolutely not. You, my good man, are there for Deke himself. He thinks he’s Carl fucking Lewis and Mohammad Ali all rolled into one. I don’t want him crossing that line in the any of the first three places and I don’t want him anywhere near Face. You got that?”

Jethro’s eyes don’t flicker from where they are burning holes into Deke’s huge forehead, but his mouth breaks out into what can only be described as a feral grin.

Face takes an early lead. Despite his hours in the gym with the others, he knows he’s not got the muscle bulk of any of Deke’s cowboys and the last thing he really wants to do is to get into a tussle with a gorilla in the middle of the forest; speed is his friend and he plans to make the very most of it.

At first, it all goes to plan. The forest is silent of everything but the calls of the birds, the sound of his boots on the damp ground and his own heavy breathing. He’s not really looking for an ambush which is why, when it comes, it takes him completely off guard. The first warning he gets is when the log he’s balancing on starts to tremble slightly, but he only has enough time to turn his head slightly and get a glimpse of Deke’s grinning features before a swift kick catches him on the thigh and – his leg instantly numb – he crumples and falls.
As falls go, and he’s had plenty, this is hardly the most graceful. His boots slip to the slide and he crashes down onto one hip, skidding forwards over the rough bark so that he tears the skin off his back and cracks his head. He manages to spin at that point though, grabbing hold of the slimy log with both hands only for Deke to aim another kick at his elbow which sees him spinning face-first into the mud below.

Face is crushed, he knows his team were depending on him to take the winning slot but the first noise he hears when he surfaces is the laughter and, of course, Deke is just about idiot enough not to seize the advantage he’s stolen from Face.

“Look at you!” for a big guy, his voice is incredibly nasal, “Crawling in the mud like one of Smith’s bitches should be. The man’s a bottom-feeder himself, makes sense that the rest of you cunts should be.”

“Fuck off,” it’s the best that Face can come up with a mouthful of mud and no breath in his lungs, but it stops Deke from moving on and completing his victory, so it does the job.

“Ah… sweet. You gonna call me out for dissing on your boss there, bitch-boy?”

“You’re spewing bullshit and you know it,” Face wishes he could massage his dead leg but he’s busy trying to get the mud out of his eyes and nose and anyway – he no desire to tip Deke off to the fact that he’s not out of the game yet. “Hannibal’s the best fucking commander in the whole damn force. He’s got more brains and guts in one hand than Crawford’s ever gonna be able to scrape together. You’re just fucking jealous that you’re stuck with him and we get the boss.”

Deke’s eyes narrow and Face is surprised to see real fury there – there’s obviously some history between Hannibal and Deke that he’s blissfully unaware of.

“You think I’d wanna serve under that conceited fucking prince?” the word is spat out into the world and only confirms Face’s suspicions. “His head’s so far up his own ass I’m surprised he can tell what day of the week it is! You all think he’s so fucking moral, so fucking noble, you wait until he sells your ass down the river just to make sure he gets his next promotion lined up.”

It’s bullshit and Face knows it, but it still stirs the anger to life inside his chest. “Yeah?” his own response is a spit as he clears the mud from his mouth. “He turn you in did he?” and now he thinks about it Face can recall the rumours although he’d never realised that Hannibal had been involved. “He felt that everyone has the right to say no? Even eighteen-year-old Japanese girls?”

“He had no fucking right to be involved!” Deke is furious. “He wasn’t my commander, he wasn’t even in my fucking chain, he was just looking for his next leg up, the next ass he could burn and that was me. He’s a self-serving, egotistical bastard with a fucking fragging coming his way. You think he’s so fucking perfect do you, Peck? You might want to question why the hell he’d want you in his team. What the fuck are you anyway? A pretty-boy con-man? He’s gonna use you for everything you can get him and fuck your ass wide open when he’s horny. Then, as soon as the heat gets a little too much around you – bam – you’ll be gone, sold out to keep himself clean and get that fucking star he’s after. And you know what, when you’re sat all alone in your cell wondering why no fucking JAG will come anywhere near you, think of this, think of me and know you were warned.”

With that, he turns and sprints of down the track and towards the finish and Face is on his feet in seconds, slipping and sliding out of the mud, his leg still fuzzy underneath him but the anger inside him driving him on. It doesn’t take him long to hunt Deke down and there’s no finesse in his move. He clatters into the bigger man from behind, timing his strike so that they both tumble off the narrow wooden bridge and fall into the shallow river below. It’s not a long drop, couple of feet at the most, but Face makes sure he stays on top, makes sure that all of his own weight crashes down on top of
Deke as they slap into the icy water, makes sure that the big man has his breath forced out by the impact and takes in a nice chest-full of river in return.

He’s not going to let him drown though, as tempting as his anger feels that could be. Instead, he drags him up by his shirt and contents himself with smashing a fist into his spluttering face, slamming his knee into his chest and kicking hard between his open legs, letting the momentum help drag him out onto the wet riverbank, watching, dispassionately, as he curls onto his side, hands cupped around his agonised balls, shivering, snivelling and retching up river water.

“You see Deke?” he’s fucking freezing and trying hard not to shiver, “If anyone’s a fucking bottom feeder around here, it’s you. And if I ever, ever hear you bad-mouthing the boss again, I swear to you, you won’t know what hit you. You said I’m a conman, well you oughta know that conmen have contacts and I have plenty in Japan who could easily track down any families I ask them to. Any families who – no doubt – carry quite the grudge about you. You understand me?”

Deke is still coughing and snivelling and so Face grabs a handful of hair, drags the man's head upright so that he can gage the level of understanding there but a sharp voice to his left shocks him into dropping it again and it hits the mud with a soft thump.

“Face!” it’s Carman, his eyes wide, his nose bloody as he takes in the scene in front of him. “Race is off. Seems Deke’s boys here were more interested in brawling than running, Morrison’s pulled the plug.” He’s wondering what’s happened, Face can see that in his eyes, wondering how Face has got the better of a man twice his weight, no doubt wondering what on earth Deke said to get Face so riled up, but Face lets it all go again. He takes a long breath in, blows it out slow and steady and forces a smile onto his face as he steps over Deke’s prone form.

“Shame,” it’s getting really hard not to shiver now, “I really think I was going to win.”

Carman doesn’t ask though, only laughs and offers him a hand, pulling him from the water’s edge and together they head back the way they’d come.

It’s only later on – when Face is wrapped in about four space blankets and sipping hot coffee from a plastic cup, watching, from under his wet hair, Carman and the boss deep in conversation and Hannibal’s eyes constantly jumping his way – that Face wonders about his own reaction, wonders about the rage and indignation that set him up against a thug like Deke. But then Hannibal sees him watching and sends a smile his way and it’s so tender, so full of wonder and gratitude that Face instantly feels warm once more and stops even thinking about what he feels and why.
Time Three

Chapter Summary

Explicit

Time Three

“Oh, Face, I don’t think this is such a good idea, you know. Not now…”

Face and Murdock stop in the entrance to the bar and Face weighs up the options, but the facts are clear: it’s thirty five degrees in the fucking shade and he’s as sweaty as hell, they’re in Bangkok and have just spent the better part of a week traipsing through the jungle and being eaten alive by just about everything that lives there, they’ve forty minutes until they have to meet up with Hannibal and BA and – on top of everything – he just fucking needs a beer.

“It’ll be fine,” he draws Murdock inside, disappointed to find it’s actually hotter inside than out, “We’ll sit over here and the dicks from Black Forest can stay over there and we’ll all behave like adults and just enjoy our beers.”

“I dunno, Face… I don’t think they like me much after that last op…”

“Nah,” Face has spotted that the bar stocks Bud and his mouth is literally watering at the thought, “They hate Hannibal far more than you, it’ll be fine. Seriously, buddy, you just grab that table there by the door and I’ll be right over.”

Murdock dutifully disappears and Face buys four bottles, only blanching a little at the inflated price of imported beer over that of Chang, and weaves his way through the crush to where Murdock is steadfastly sitting with his back to Black Forest’s table. “Four?” his mouth cracks into a smile though, when he sees Face and Face happily returns it.

“Fuck, yeah. You don’t think we’ve earned it? After that last op?”

For half an hour, all is calm, and Face and Murdock talk quietly about the op and what they’re going to do with their down-time in Thailand and which resort they should head for and Face has almost forgotten about the table of contractors across the way, until a shadow falls across their table and he looks up to find a smugly grinning Sal Jones looking down on him.

“Peck.”

His heart sinks as he watches Murdock shuffle a little further away from the brick-wall in the polo but he’s content that Jones wants to ignore the pilot and hopes that, whatever the fuck this is, it will be done with long before Hannibal and BA arrive.

“Jones,” he nods in greeting and raises his beer a little; for the sake of a quiet afternoon, he’s willing to play nice.

“Where’s Smith? We want a word with him.”

“Yeah?” Face pulls himself up a little straighter in his seat. “Off duty. Like us. Why don’t you call
the office in Benning? Make yourself an appointment for the new year?”

Jones frowns, and Face wishes he’d been a little less smart in his answer. “Not good enough. We wanna make a complaint.”

Face sighs at that and puts his bottle down on the table, good mood evaporating in an instant, unlike the sweat in his clothes and hair which never seems to dry in this wet heat. “Look, Sal, just drop it why don’t you? We’ve all had a rough op, we’ve all got back safe and sound we just need to-”

“Safe and sound?” Face winces at the anger in that voice.

“Your fucking lunatic pilot crashed into the fucking hillside with us on board! He could have killed us all! He’s not fit to fucking fly – should be in a fucking nut bin for sure!”

Face can just about feel Murdock wilting at his side and wishes he’d taken his buddy’s advice and searched for beers elsewhere but it’s too late now and so he needs to step up and take responsibility for his actions – and his friend. He stands up, pleased to find he’s got an inch of height on Jones, and lets out a sweet smile. “Yeah. Problem is though, Murdock was just following orders see, from the boss. You had that drug cartel on your six and they had a coupla sidewinders on board, woulda shot you out the sky for sure. Hannibal knew that they wouldn’t waste the ammo if they thought you’d crashed so yeah – problem solved.”

“Problem solved?” Jones steps in a little, “I didn’t see Smith ordering your fucking chopper to crash! I’ve got three men in the hospital ‘cause of this! You know how much that’s gonna cost us?”

Face swallows the retort he wants to fire back about the amount of money the PMCs are getting paid in comparison to what he makes and instead changes his expression into one he hopes shows concern he certainly doesn’t feel. “Yeah, that sucks, right? Thing is though, we didn’t need our helo to crash as we weren’t being followed by the cartel, so…” he shrugs and smiles.

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“Smith tried to kill us,” Jones back up his ridiculous claim with a jab to Face’s sternum which stirs his anger into life. “He’s as much a fucking lunatic as this loser and he’s outta fucking control. He needs taking down a notch, Pike says he’s too old for the job now, lost his edge.”

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“Problem solved?” Face swallows the rising tide of anger away. “Well, Pike would be wrong. And it’s not the first time, now, is it?”

“He’s not wrong, he’s fucking on the nail,” that prodding finger is back and Face swallows again. “Smith is an egotistical mega-maniac and-”

“– Yeah, I think the word you’re wanting is megalomaniac –”

“– Like I said, he’s too fucking old for this shit. He’s fucking senile, losing his marbles, about time he checked into an old folk’s home. Bet he’d like that, sitting around and looking at all the fat broads in their tight dresses, drooling into his meds, letting people like Pike make the decisions that need making instead of ordering his fucking pet lunatic into crashing into fucking mountains and fucking killing the people who are here to win this war!”

“What war?” Face can’t believe this guy could actually be this stupid. “We’re not at war with the fucking Thais, we’re helping them eradicate their drugs suppliers!” He’s desperately trying to stop his mind dwelling over the comments Jones has made about Hannibal and Murdock because he knows, if he lets them sink in, he’ll probably want to kill the bastard.

“Whatever,” Jones clearly has no idea why he’s in Thailand. “But you know what we should be eradicating? Instead? Your fucking Hannibal Smith. He should be put out of his misery like the
useless old dog he is. Shot in the head and thrown out for the fucking pigs to eat, that’s what they do with dogs out here. He’s past it, Peck, face it. Old and senile and—” he stops with the fist that drives into his gut and can’t start up again with the force of the wall slamming into his back, the iron forearm clamped over his throat or the barrel of the Glock pressed tight against his temple.

“Don’t,” Face can feel the anger coursing through him and it’s taking everything he has not to let his finger pull that trigger, “you ever fucking talk about my unit, my commander, like that again, do you understand me?” The bar is deadly quiet, and Face knows that every single person is listening to him, but Jones can’t answer, can only stare with wide and terrified eyes. “You bozos wouldn’t recognise a strategic genius if he fucking kicked you in the balls so let me tell you now, nice and clear, that that’s what Hannibal is, right? And he’s not even reached his peak yet, not even done half the things he can fucking do so watch your mouth and watch your back because if that strategic genius ever decides to come for you, you’ll be peeing your pants in fear and I’ll be there to watch it all.”

“Face!”

He jumps back, can’t help himself, but the Glock stays where it is even as Face’s eyes swivel to the door and zero in on Hannibal Smith and his furious expression, BA just behind him obviously deciding who he needs to punch out first.

“Put him down.”

Face hasn’t even noticed, until that point, that Jones’ feet are off the ground, but he lets him down, takes a step away and silently holsters his Glock away.

“Pike needs to keep his monkeys on a shorter leash,” Hannibal tells the silent table of Black Forest then turns his eyes Murdock’s way. “There’s a cab outside, we’re leaving. Come on, and bring him.”

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It’s a tense and silent ride, Face’s eyes glued to the window as he, Murdock and BA are pressed up together in the sweaty back of the car, Hannibal ramrod straight in front of them. Face doesn’t even know where they’re going. It’s late afternoon when the cab pulls into the parking lot of an opulent looking hotel and – mindful of the boss’ steaming temper and his own sweaty and dishevelled appearance, he lurks at the back of the group waiting to be sent off to share a room with Murdock so that Hannibal can keep on ignoring him.

It’s not what he gets though. Face has had a lot of practice, these last twelve years, of reading Hannibal now it seems that the boss looks just – intense – and not necessarily angry. It’s odd. Even odder is the curt way that he throws Murdock and BA their keys and tells them that dinner is in the buffet at eight before just turning on his heels and marching away. Face stands for a moment, looks to Murdock who can only shrug, and then traipses after him, too confused by what’s going on to really appreciate the delights that their five-star residence has on offer.

Hannibal stops at a door marked, Royal, and slips his key card in place, waiting for the beep before striding in. Face stands outside, still not really sure is he’s actually invited and it’s only when Hannibal’s big hand catches the door before it slides closed, that he takes a breath and follows, convincing himself that he’s been bawled out in far worse places before.

It’s not what he gets though, and his confusion only notches up a few levels before Hannibal only waits for his kitbag to hit the tiled floor before grabbing him and slamming him up against the wall of the suite, much like Face had done with Jones only hours before.

“What was that?” he whispers, the intensity in his blue eyes making Face’s heart pound in his chest.
“What was what?” Face wonders why he sounds like a fucking teenage girl.

“In the bar. With Jones. What was that? Why’d you have your fucking weapon to his head?”

Face flushes. Shit, that was bad. If they’d been in any country other than Thailand he’d be in the shit for sure, what was he thinking? Letting his anger drive him like that? What the fuck was wrong with him? “I’m sorry…” it’s all he can think to say.

“No,” Hannibal shakes him slightly, presses his long body even closer to Face’s and asks again, “I want to know what it was,” his voice is barely more than a whisper. “What made you lose control like that. What was it, kid? Tell me.”

And now Face’s confusion is at peak levels, Hannibal doesn’t seem angry, not really, but Face has acted like a jack-ass, could have blown everything for them all but the boss only wants to know why? Why indeed. It’s a truth that Face himself has barely recognised.

“He was bad-mouthing you. You and Murdock. I wasn’t gonna let that go.”

“People bad-mouth us all the time, especially Murdock. You’re usually happy with a biting insult or a hard punch, what was the difference this time?”

Face can only stare, Hannibal is hypnotising at the best of times but right here, right now… he couldn’t pull his eyes away if his life depended on it. “He was a dick…”

“Go on.”

“I didn’t like what he was saying about you.”

“Why?”

Face frowns, not ‘What?’ but ‘Why?’ What could Face say to that? “I didn’t like it.”

Hannibal leans right in and Face is sure that he can feel an unexpected pressure against his hip. The boss’ eyes are so close now, it’s all Face can see and his mouth, it’s so, so, so very close that he can feel the words on his lips as Hannibal whispers them. “Why didn’t you like it, Temp? I need to know. What was it? Why?”

Face’s heart is hammering, his legs feel like jelly and the words are being pulled from his chest without his permission. “Because it was you.”

“And?”

Fuck, Hannibal was so close, “And you’re mine.”

Pause.

“I am?”

“Yeah.”

“And you’re mine?”

Swallow. “Yeah.”

Another pause.
“How?”

Face has to close his eyes, what the fuck is this? He shakes his head. “In every way.”

“How?” Jesus, Hannibal’s lips are almost touching his now. “But that’s not true is it, Temp? Do I have your mind?” Face nods. “Your soul?” another nod. “Your heart?” his cheeks flush an even darker shade of red, but he nods anyway. “Oh, that’s so good.” Hannibal’s voice is low and throaty and doing things to Face’s body that only a firm hand has achieved before. “But I haven’t got your body, have I? I’ve never had your body…”

They’re poised, Face can see that now. Precariously balanced on the tipping point, one wrong move either way could send them tumbling backwards for ever more. He forces his eyes open, he needs to see for this, needs to know exactly what Hannibal is thinking, what he’s feeling, it might not be one hundred percent fool-proof but it’s a skill he’s spent years developing. He’s shocked at what he can see, the raw emotion in that well-known face, the longing, the uncertainty. He takes a breath. “But it’s always been yours,” he watches Hannibal’s pupils dilate. “Everything I am has always been yours. You just need to take it, whenever you want, I’ve been waiting.” And he suddenly realises that he has.

Hannibal swallows, his grip tightens and his head cocks slightly as he studies Face. “But I only want it if you do. I’d never do anything unless it was what you wanted too…”

Face has no words, now recognised, the longing in his body is tripling with every second and so he just surges forward the scant millimetres he needs to find Hannibal’s lips and kisses, trying to say, with everything he is, just how much he does want this.

It seems to work as Hannibal moves forward, holding Face’s head in one big hand and angling him in to deepen the kiss whilst a solid arm snakes around his waist, lifting and encouraging Face’s legs up and around his waist.

Face plays along, lost in the wonder of it all, gripping with his thighs as Hannibal squirms and twists beneath him, the kiss totally consuming everything he is. And then there is pressure on his belt and the hand on his head is gone, he presses his shoulders into the wall and feels his combats being opened and dragged down over his butt, feels them tugged tight over his thighs as a determined tongue enters his mouth and starts thrusting in a way that sends stars into his brain. The stars only multiply in the next instant, though, when a finger is pushed up inside him and he knows he’s too tight for this to be done dry, too tight after long ago giving up on letting anyone who wasn’t Hannibal fuck him. He wants to say that, wants to warn the boss that this just isn’t going to work but he’s pinned against the wall and there’s a persistent tongue thrusting away inside his mouth and he can’t do anything. The finger is gone then, and he’s disappointed it hadn’t found his happy-button, but then it’s back, cool and slippery and Face sucks enthusiastically on the tongue inside him as it reaches up and finds his prostate, rubbing steadily enough to have him moaning and baring down on it wondering if anything has ever felt this wonderful before.

He’s quickly brought right to the edge, moaning and gasping around the every-present tongue, squirming and thrusting to try and get some friction on his desperate cock. But then it all goes, the tongue, the finger, only a firm arm under his naked butt keeping him up and he looks up at Hannibal in shock, knowing what a wanton picture he must present, all needy and kiss-red with his thighs spread wide and his swollen cock dripping into the airconditioned cool. Hannibal stares back at though, his own expression tender and desperate in the same moment and it steals Face’s breath. “I’m gonna take you now,” the voice is strained and breathless and Face is full of wonder when he realises that’s all because of him. “I’m gonna fill you with my cock and make you mine. Completely. Forever. I’m gonna come inside you and claim you,” he pauses, “If that’s what you want…”
Face’s mouth is dry, and his thighs are cramping but, dear God, he’s never wanted anything more. Ever. “Yeah,” it’s not enough, but his brain is short-circuiting in expectation of pleasure, so he resorts to gabbling Hannibal’s words back at him. “I want that, yeah. Your cock, coming in me,” no one has ever done that before, Face has never let anyone bareback him before, maybe he’d been unconsciously saving himself for this precise moment. “I want to you fuck me, I want you to take me, Jesus, John, I’m yours, I’m yours, I’m- ahhh!”

He breaks off, head thumping against the wall, eyes screwing closed as Hannibal’s cock just surges up inside him, one smooth, slick thrust that feels like it’s tearing him in two. He can’t shut it out though, he’s being held open, crushed against the wall with Hannibal’s hips between his thighs, he can’t stop it, he can’t speak to beg Hannibal to stop and it’s wonderful and agonising, all in one go.

“I’m sorry,” Hannibal’s hips are thrusting, that huge cock pounding away at Face’s sensitive insides, “You just feel too fucking incredible and I’ve wanted this so damn long, been jerking off to the thought of this since you were eighteen years old...”

That’s an incredibly arousing thought, but Face is still in too much discomfort to really get off on it until Hannibal shifts his angle slightly, suddenly pummelling Face’s prostate with the wide head of his swollen cock, and reaching around at the same instant, grabbing Face’s own erection and squeezing hard as his slick fingers start to pump up and down.

Face yells out, a wordless reaction to the stimulation Hannibal is heaping on him but then he bites it all back as he always has done.

“Oh, no...” Hannibal is nibbling at the cords on Face’s neck as he desperately thrusts inside him, “Don’t do that, sweetheart, don’t hold back. If it’s good, I want to hear it, I want to hear you. This is a fucking expensive suite, thick walls, so come on, baby, go for it.”

Face does, every thrust in pulls a moan from his lips and every time Hannibal presses into the slit of this cock with a blunt nail he damn near yells. It’s not going to last long though, even at the awkward angle, and soon Hannibal abandons Face’s cock for holding him with two hands instead and the pummelling becomes frantic. Face’s moans are almost constant and are matched with Hannibal’s grunts and then, with a roar like a triumphant lion Hannibal explodes inside him, ramming himself deeper and deeper with every thrust, the whispered, “Mine, mine, mine,” in Face’s ear, pushing him over the edge even as his sensitised cock is jammed between their hair-sprinkled bellies.

He comes like he never has before, the pulses of his orgasm so powerful they’re almost painful and he’s still spurting over them both as Hannibal collapses under him and they hit the floor, the cool marble shocking him back to awareness as he flirts dangerously close to passing out.

“There you okay?” Hannibal is there in an instant, his warm hand softly holding Face’s cock, gentle enough not to hurt, his eyes wide at the wonder of it all.

Face can’t answer. His brain, helpfully, provides him with a picture of how he must look, lips red and swollen, t-shirt sweaty and filthy, his cock, still hard and oozing come as Hannibal holds it in his fist, his legs wide, Hannibal’s seed dripping from him and sliding onto the marble floor, probably some blood in there too, his boots still on, combat rammed down over his thighs. He feels the flush in his cheeks, wants to crawl away and die as he remembers how he’s moaned and yelled but then there’s a pressure on his lips, light and wonderful and he opens his eyes, sees Hannibal smiling at him.

“I love you,” the words are sincere, Face knows that with everything he is. “I love you so much and I’m so, so thrilled that you’re mine. I can’t believe it. It’s all I’ve ever wanted...”
Face smiles too then, feels himself growing even harder in Hannibal's grip, and just resigns himself to it all, knowing that this is just going to be fucking incredible.
It’s silent in the interview room and Face just sits, just waits and knows that they’re trying to freak him out with the length of time he’s been here. They don’t know, though, how impossible that task is. How can he freak out about anything when he’s this numb? When he’s this cold and hard and disbelieving? The entire life he thought he knew, the life he knew and trusted, has just turned around and bitten him, devoured him really, him and his entire team. What else can freak him out after that?

The door opens eventually and Captain Sanderson wanders in. Face doesn’t like him, doesn’t trust him, doesn’t like the fact that he’s never once ask for Face’s cuffs to be removed when they talk, like he doesn’t trust Face either, doesn’t trust his own client, like he’s expecting Face to snap his neck and use his dead body to break down the door and escape. He’d be even more wary if he knew that Face had considered it.

“Lieutenant Peck, good morning.”

“Why do you insist on calling me that?”

Sanderson is busily unpacking various plastic folders from his very expensive-looking briefcase and barely pauses to throw Face a look. “Because it’s your name.”

“It’s my rank,” Face parries, “and we all know that my rank will be gone just as soon as the Court Martial is through. Face is my name – you could use that.”

Sanderson ignores him, like he always does, and sits in the chair across the table, just far enough away that Face couldn’t grab for him and smiles, a smile that makes Face think of leeches and paedophiles. “I have a proposition for you,” his leech-smile widens. “One that might just keep you in the Army.”

Face tries not to scoff, as if he’d ever want to go back to the Army after all this. “Will it keep me outta jail?” Because that’s what he fears, the isolation, the fighting to keep himself himself, the not seeing his team, the not seeing Hannibal, but Sanderson just cocks his head as if Face is a particularly stupid child.

“I doubt that, in light of what you’ve done.”
What I’ve done, Face wants to scream, is followed their fucking orders!

“You say you were ordered into Baghdad? Ordered to appropriate those plates?”

“Yes,” it’s not like they haven’t been over this at least forty times.

“By Smith?”

“By Morrison.”

“But you never saw that order yourself?”

Face rolls his eyes and wishes the cuffs were gone so he could fold his arms over his chest – he’s feeling very exposed. “There was no written order. It was a Black Op. Almost all of our ops were given verbally, no paper trail – it’s safer that way and if you were a proper fucking soldier you’d appreciate that.”

“I am a proper fucking soldier,” Sanderson shoots back. “I’ve had the same basic training that you have,” and this time Face does scoff. “And I’m your superior, so you’d better start showing me due respect, soldier, or I’ll have you up on a charge of insubordination as well as everything else.”

“I apologise, sir,” Face laces the word with as much insolence as he can muster. “But do you really think I give a fuck about any of that when you all think I murdered Morrison?”

“Not you specifically,” Sanderson counters.

“My team murdered Morrison,” Face amends and Sanderson holds his eye.

“Smith murdered Morrison,” he corrects.

Face lets that sit for a minute and then shakes his head, looking away so that Sanderson can’t see the moisture in his eyes at the unfairness of it all. “Hannibal didn’t kill Morrison, he was his friend. Black Forest murdered him, like I told you. About a hundred times.”
“Black Forest are all dead. Except for Pike, and he’s vanished.”

“And doesn’t that tell you something?”

“It tells me that Pike wasn’t working alone, that he had an accomplice and that accomplice was Smith.”

“That’s bullshit.”

“Maybe,” Sanderson leans across the table, “but it’s also your way out.”

Face narrows his eyes and considers Sanderson’s words, “What exactly are you getting at here, Captain, sir?”

There’s only the slightest pause before, “We want to nail Smith to the post. He’s a rebel and a trouble-maker and people like him have no place in our Army. He thinks he’s fucking Robin Hood or something and there’s too much chuntering through the ranks about how this whole mess stinks, how he should be allowed to walk free, be reinstated, public fucking apology, the whole thing-”

“He should be.”

“And we’d like to cut that all dead. Stop the tongues wagging, remind people he’s just a flawed individual and not a folk hero and for that to work convincingly, we need you.”

Face watches him carefully. “You’d like me to lie and incriminate Hannibal for you?”

“No!” Sanderson looks like Face has just asked him to roast babies instead of turkeys next Thanksgiving and Face doesn’t have the time to wonder at that skewed moral compass before clarification is thrown out there. “We’d like you to explain how all of this was Smith’s doing, how he ordered you and Baracus and Murdock into following his plan and then tried to leave the three of you carrying the can.”
“So, yeah, lie then.”

“No!” Sanderson is obviously finding this trying, but not as trying as Face. “Did you hear Morrison order you into Baghdad?”

Face pauses, “No.”

“So, how do you know that he did?”

No pause this time, “Because that’s what Hannibal told me.”

“And you believed him?”

“Yes.”

“Still?”

“Yes.”

“Even though he tried to frame you all?”

“No, he didn’t!” Face can feel his patience unravelling and is powerless to stop it. “He didn’t lie, he didn’t try and frame us, he didn’t go into Baghdad for any reason other than the fact that General Morrison had ordered us in there to get those plates and stop a disaster just waiting to happen!”

Sanderson steeples his fingers, “Can’t you see how he’s been playing you, all these years?”

“No, he hasn’t.”

“Using your loyalty to blind you to his scheming and his plotting?”
“Plotting what?? He followed his orders like the rest of us!”

“Plotting his retirement!” Sanderson actually looks like this makes sense to him. “Lining his nest egg with back-handers and crooked deals and opportunities! Using you and the others as a smokescreen, keeping you around to cover for him when the end came. This was supposed to have been his final act, the big one that could see him retire to the Maldives or something. I mean, come on, Lieutenant… you, Baracus, Murdock… you’re hardly crack commando material now, are you?”

“We’re Rangers,” Face finds his voice is breaking – just like the rest of him – and somehow this distinction really matters. “Not fucking commandos.”

“Whatever. We just need you to tell us the truth about Smith.”

Face can only stare at the table, “I have done.”

There’s a long sigh from Sanderson, “You’re being very troublesome.”

“I’m being very truthful,” and Sanderson doesn’t know how honoured he is to get that from Face.

“Look, Lieutenant, just say that you didn’t hear the order, that you had no proof that-”

“No!” Face is on his feet before he even realises it. “I will not sell Hannibal down the river, I will not lie and deceive so that you can make an example out of him. I’m not playing your games and if that means I go to jail for the rest of my fucking life then I will, because Hannibal is a good man, an honest man, who has given his best for his country for over thirty fucking years! He doesn’t deserve this, none of us do, we haven’t done a damn thing wrong!”

He stays on his feet, cuffed hands leaning on the table, ignoring the guard who slipped in at his shouting and is now standing, awkwardly, in the open door. Sanderson, meanwhile, is still sitting in his seat, his expression, pensive and Face is just starting to wonder if his words have hit home when the JAG speaks again, “Murdock and Baracus have agreed to tell the truth,” his words are quiet, cold, and Face finds himself crashing back into his plastic seat in shock. “If you hold out now, you’ll look like Smith’s accomplice and get exactly the same treatment as him.”
For a moment he can’t get his head around those words, they’re simply reverberating noises but then he shakes them free, employs all he knows of his brothers and stares Sanderson right in the eyes, “No. They haven’t.”

There’s a long pause and then Sanderson simply lets out a long sigh. “Last chance, Lieutenant, are you going to cooperate with us or not?”

Face smiles, and somehow it feels like an act of suicide. “Fuck you. Captain, sir.”

The chair squeals as Sanderson pushes it back and rises to his feet, packing away his folders. “I thought you had more brains than this, Peck.”

“Face.”

“Seems I was wrong,” they stare at each other across the table. “If you change your mind-”

“I won’t.”

“- then you know how to get in touch with me.”

Face is silent as Sanderson stalks to the door and the guard opens it for him. Together they slip out and Face is left alone.

‘You might want to question why the hell he’d want you in his team. What the fuck are you anyway? A pretty-boy con-man? He’s gonna use you for everything you can get him and fuck your ass wide open when he’s horny. Then, as soon as the heat gets a little too much around you – bam – you’ll be gone, sold out to keep himself clean and get that fucking star he’s after. And you know what, when you’re sat all alone in your cell wondering why no fucking JAG will come anywhere near you, think of this, think of me and know you were warned.’

Face covers his ears, but the twenty-year-old words are in his head and remain stubbornly loud, even though Face knows damn well that they’re lies. But maybe it’s all lies? All of it? And Face is suddenly terrified that nothing will ever be true for him again.
“It’s a beautiful city,” Face straightens up from sifting through the ashes of the bonfire and looks out across the rolling fields towards the distant conurbation. “So much history in such a small place.”

His guide laughs even as he comes to stand at Face’s elbow and share the view. “Don’t you Americans think anywhere out of the States is small?”

Face just shrugs, transfixed by the way that the city is rising out of the pink morning haze, the golden buildings like cakes edged in intricate frosting. “And that sweet City with her dreaming spires, she needs not June for beauty’s heightening,” he laughs a little, “Who’d have thought that I’d ever be here to see them for myself, and in June as well, it’s more beautiful than I could have imagined.” There’s a silence at that and he turns to find the Inspector watching him curiously. “What?” he ducks his head self-consciously and returns to poking through the ashes. “You never heard that poem before?”

“Oh, I’ve heard it alright,” and now there are two trowels combing the ashes, “I just didn’t expect… Oh, nothing, it’s nothing, let’s just get this finished.”

They work together in silence for a few minutes before Face speaks again, he’s been out all night following dead ends and half clues and has dissected three cold bonfire pits as the pink dawn has risen around him, he feels he has the right to be a little pissy. “So, what then? You figured I wasn’t one for poetry because, what exactly? I’m a soldier, or I’m an American?”

There isn’t an answer at first and they finish their job, unsurprised to find nothing of any interest and again Face turns to find Lewis watching him, the frown he’s wearing making his face almost as creased as his suit. “No, neither, I just…” he shakes his head, “Are you calling him, or am I?”

Face is more than a little territorial where Hannibal is concerned and this ‘old friend’ that greeted his lover with such a fierce and long hug has him a little thrown. “I will,” he offers and pulls out his mobile. “Hey boss,” Hannibal answers straight away and Face is blunt in his assessment of the night’s work. “That was a complete bust, total waste of time, we searched all the pits and there’s nothing in there that’s not what you wouldn’t expect to find in a bonfire.” Hannibal’s answer is immediate and has Face frowning. “Of course I’m fucking sure,” he rubs at his forehead, “Yeah, he looked too. What’s the matter, don’t you trust me anymore?” It’s a joke, Face means it as a joke, but he can’t keep the edge of bitterness out of his voice whilst Hannibal’s answering reassurances are just as flippant.

“Okay then, so is someone coming out to pick us up?” Face’s expression darkens as he hears the
answer and he turns to Lewis, patiently standing at his side and whispers, “How far back to the city?”

The Inspector’s expression is granite, but his tone is undeniably irritated as he mouths back, “Four miles,” and Face shakes his head.

“We’re gonna be ninety minutes of you want us to walk,” Face tells his phone, “it’ll only take one of you twenty to come out here and get us.”

He listens to his reply in silence and then ends the call without another word instantly stalking off towards the stile in the corner of their field. “We’re walking?” Lewis says as he catches up.

“Yeah,” Face knows he’s snapping, “we’re walking,” and they head off in silence.

The silence lasts twenty minutes and Face’s anger has lost its hot edge before Lewis speaks again and the direction of his thoughts is not what Face is expecting.

“So, the poetry then, Lieutenant,” it annoys Face that it’s pronounced Lef-tenant, “did that come before you met Hannibal or after?”

“Call me Face, I’m not in the Army any more, after all.”

He can feel Lewis watching him, but he’s used to it all now, that particular betrayal can’t hurt him anymore.

“If you call me Robbie?” He doesn’t look like a Robbie but what the hell, what does Face care anyway? He nods, and Robbie prompts him again, “The poetry?”

“After,” Face breathes it out as if it’s an admission, not even sure why it bothers him. “But I’ve been with Hannibal since I was eighteen so there wasn’t that much before anyway.”

“People usually achieve a lot in their first eighteen years,” Robbie offers conversationally, “It’s what shapes them as a person.”
Face spent his first eighteen years being passed around various care homes and foster parents before bouncing his way through drug experimentation, stealing, juvenile and hooking – he hopes to hell it’s not what’s shaped him but knows that Robbie wants an answer so contents himself with, “I grew up in an orphanage,” it usually closes conversations down pretty neatly and this one is no different.

Robbie isn’t silent for long, and when he speaks again he’s changed tack slightly. “When I first met Hannibal, he always had a book in his hand,” Face is desperate to ask when that was, what caused these two unlikely men to cross paths, but he just can’t. Part of him probably doesn’t want to know, but the rest of him just can’t admit that it’s not something Hannibal’s told him already. “It set him apart from the rest of the unit,” another glance was cast Face’s way. “I thought it marked him as unique amongst soldiers, but now I meet you and I’m not so sure.”

They walk in silence again as the dreaming spires vanish behind lush oaks and the morning sun starts to get enough heat in it that Face takes off his jacket.

“I read a lot in prison, Hannibal sent me the books.” He doesn’t know where that admission comes from but realises now that the books were Hannibal’s way of reaching out to him, of telling him he was loved without actually using the words. He wishes he’d known that at the time, it might have saved him some anger and meant their reunion was less – explosive.

“American authors? Hemingway? Harper Lee?”

“Yeah. And Steinbeck, Jack London but then British stuff too, the war poets, Owen, Graves. That’s what got me into poetry I guess, the pictures they can paint with just a few words, it’s like you’re really there.”

“But you travel so much, I bet you’ve been over the entire world, why would you need poets to paint you a picture?”

“I don’t know,” Face tries to spot the spires of Oxford over the tops of the trees, but they’re gone. “We never get to see anything though, do anything. Hannibal’s always got the next gig lined up – we drop in, spend all our time in alleys or basements or storerooms just watching, get beaten up a little, get shot at, get paid half of what we’re owed and then we’re off again, on to the next job and the next farmer who need saving or whatever the fuck we’re doing.”

“It’s good work, though,” Face bristles at the sympathy he knows is in Robbie’s voice. “What you’re doing. I mean when you find this family’s daughter, Andrea Barnes, when you rescue her from the
“It won’t be a cult,” Face wishes he wasn’t so bitter. “She’ll be with friends, some unsuitable boyfriend her father doesn’t like, something like that. She won’t want to go home, we won’t get paid,” he shrugs, “It’ll be something like that.”

The silence is back, and Face wishes they were already in Oxford, he’s tired and grouchy and wishes they could have some time off.

“You know,” Robbie is looking at the sky as he’s talking, “Hannibal is the type of man you really remember meeting. I mean I was a very young man when I met him, and he made such an impression, he was so determined and convincing and driven. I remember thinking that he was something incredibly special, for a long time I compared myself to him and came up short.” Face can certainly relate to that. “But then, well, I realised that he was just a man, just like any of us and his confidence didn’t make him always right, didn’t make him omnipotent…”

Face frowns and glances Robbie’s way, trying to work out what this is. “Hannibal doesn’t think he’s a god or something, you know.”

“I know,” Robbie’s smile is pleasant, disarming, “But does he ever think he’s wrong? Are mistakes ever his? Does he understand your frustrations? How tired you are with all of this? What did he say when you told him how you felt?”

Face has never told Hannibal how he feels, what’s the point? They have a job to do and a living to make and, until their names are cleared, they don’t have a lot of options as to how that’s going to happen so what is the point? And does Hannibal ever think he’s wrong? Well, he used to, back in the Army and just after, when they were all reeling from Morrison’s betrayal but recently? He’s not so sure…

“He’s a good leader,” having this discussion with Robbie feels all wrong though and he can’t help the loyalty that runs through him like the rings of a tree. “It’s not easy, keeping us safe, keeping us away from the Army, making sure we have enough food to eat, somewhere to stay, money for transport and ordnance and clothes and shit.”

“I thought you did all that?”

Face frowns, “What?”
“The money and the accommodation, the equipment, the ‘shit’. That’s what Hannibal told me, told me you sort all of that out for the whole team, manage the finances, the savings, the investments, even have a pension fund going. He’s very proud of you, thinks you’re doing an incredible job.”

“Could have fooled me,” Face’s retort is quiet, but he knows Robbie hears it.

“So, what does he do then?” they are in the scruffier outskirts of Oxford now, passing carpet shops and budget hotels and Face is back to looking at the distant architecture, wondering if they’ll have the time to take a river trip before they have to leave for the next job.

“What?”

“Hannibal. If you’re the details man, the one who keeps everyone happy and clothed and fed and gets them everything they need, what does he do?”

The implication lights a fuse in Face’s chest and he whirls on Robbie, his eyes blazing, his cheeks hot. “He’s the reason we’re all alive!” he’s savagely pleased at the way his anger surprises the Inspector, “He’s our rock, our guide, he gives us purpose and guidance and direction. We trust him, we’d follow him to fucking hell and back if he asked us to. He’s our leader, our commander, what more do I have to say?”

Robbie watches him for a moment and then walks off again, “Why’d you need a commander if you’re not in the army anymore?” the question seems rhetorical which is fortunate as Face doesn’t have an answer. “And it’s funny, but it sounds like you’re in a cult far more than anything I’ve heard from Andrea Barnes…”

Face is fuming but he has nothing to say and they walk the rest of the way back in silence.

Hannibal is smoking a cigar whilst BA loads the van up as Face and Lewis round the corner of the workshop courtyard they’ve been using as a base. Sergeant Hathaway is there as well, pouring over ancient maps with Murdock, their lanky forms pressed close together over a picnic table and the two barely lift their heads at the new arrivals.

“About time, too!” Hannibal, it seems has had more sleep and more showers than Face if his chipper mood is to be believed. “We’ve been waiting to head off.”
“Head off?” Face is thinking of the boat trip and a shower and a sleep and something to eat but Hannibal is already tossing him his poorly-packed kit bag and his heart sinks.

“Yeah, we have a lead in Durham, think they may have moved up there. We can set off now and be there by late afternoon, give you plenty of time to find us somewhere to stay. And a chopper, lots of open areas we’ll need to search. A FLIR would be good too. And maybe a drone, then we can start searching properly tonight.”

Face looks to Murdock who is still buried in the ancient maps with Hathaway, then to BA who is muttering under his breath at the state of the spark plugs in their rented van and finally to Lewis who just raises an eyebrow as Face traipses dejectedly towards the back of the van. Hannibal watches him and, for the briefest of moments, his brow creases in a frown but then it’s all wiped away again, Murdock is retrieved, BA satisfied and the van roars into life.

Lewis and Hathaway accept their thanks and their hugs and Murdock’s invite to the States and then they stand and wave as the van rolls out of the yard and into the morning traffic, leaving them alone in the morning sunshine.

James turns then and it’s as if he’s going to say something, but Robbie has something he wants to say first, something he’s been wanting to say for the last hour. “You know that case we had, last month? Rose Anderson? The jogger?”

There’s a pause as James considers this and then he nods, “Of course,” he remembers all of their cases.

“Well, I don’t think I ever said,” Robbie starts walking, out the same way the van has just gone, heading along the pavement towards home, “What an excellent job you did with the research, finding out that that play was bogus, that Flaxmore was a fraud, all of that.”

James frowns and follows his boss out, “Thank you. But, what.”

“Just thought I’d mention it, that’s all,” Lewis’ smile is as bright as the morning sunshine and the force of it swallows up any more comments that James might have been about to make. They turn into the main road together and head into the city centre, Robbie’s eyes on the distant spires, words of poetry drifting around his head.
And the One Time He Didn’t

Chapter Summary

Warning for reference to violence.

Hannibal tests his bindings and isn’t surprised to find them secure, of course they are, what had he expected anyway? He shifts on the wooden seat and feels the pain from his recent beating as it courses through his old bones, maybe Face was right and they should have retired years ago. Maybe he was too old for the Soldier of Fortune business, maybe he should have let them slide off to Hawaii and a place in the sun. Maybe. But none of that is even worth considering any more.

The door to the storeroom creaks open and Yusef walks in with his entire entourage trailing after. Hannibal keeps his eyes fixed firmly on the bossman; there are things here he’d rather not dwell on at this particularly difficult moment in his life, and staying alive will be challenge enough for him as it is.

“Colonel Smith.”

“Yusef.”

“I’m glad my guards didn’t kill you when they picked you up, that would have been very inconvenient.”

“It would,” Hannibal forces his voice into light and jovial, “I have dry cleaning I need to collect on Monday.”

Yusef’s smile is tight, “Oh, you’ll be dead by Monday, Colonel; you’ll be dead in another ten minutes actually, I just wanted to be here to watch it, that’s all, it’s a treat for me after the pain in the ass you’ve been these last few months.”

“Really?” It’s hard to frown after the beating he took earlier on but he goes for it anyway, “And I thought we were friends, I thought we were having fun?”

“You were trying to close me down,” the menace in that voice reminds Hannibal why this man is
feared from one side of New York to the other. “And you stuck at it, when other men would have realised that they were beaten, you refused to give up, you refused to listen to your men and you were pig-headed in your determination to succeed, no matter what the cost. You think that makes you a good leader, it doesn’t, it makes you a fool.”

Hannibal smiles and winks but inside he’s dying with the shame of it all. The tragedy of this story is that Yusef is absolutely right, Hannibal has been pig-headed and foolish, ploughing on ahead, desperate to free the city from the man’s iron-fist at any cost. Even if that cost landed on Face, even if the man he professed to love more than life itself suffered more than one beating for his troubles, more than one kidnap, more than one knife or bullet headed his way. Even if, just like Yusef said, he’d ignored the arguments of his men, the pleading, the begging… it’s no wonder that Face chose the path he did.

“Hey,” it’s like Yusef can read his mind and he flicks his fingers, getting Hannibal's eyes back on him, smiling that cruel and mocking smile again. “You want a last treat, old man? You want to see what you could have had? What’s mine now? You want to see what your damn pride has cost you?”

He doesn’t, not really, not at all actually, but then maybe he does, maybe he’s spent so many nights laying awake and wondering that seeing would at least allow him to die knowing. And he’s definitely going to die, he knows that now. He doesn’t answer though, and it seems that Yusef didn’t really expect him to because the little entourage is parting, right there at Yusef’s side and there he is, a whole month without setting eyes on him and he’s just as beautiful as ever now that the marks of that latest beating have faded from his features.

“Face,” the word is pulled from his lips and he wants to say more, wants to say he's sorry, he’s so, so sorry but he can’t, not even now at the end of it all, not even to try and bring some light back to those dead eyes. “Are you alright, kid?” His kid is in his forties now, a whole lifetime of serving at Hannibal's side ending like this, it’s just tragic, but he will always, always be, Hannibal's kid.

“What the fuck do you care?” the malice is thick, the pain sharp and Hannibal draws breath at the agony he hears through it all – agony he put there. But apologise? Admit weakness in front of this enemy? He might be beaten but he just can’t, not even for Face.

“It’s interesting, isn’t it?” Yusef is clearly enjoying every moment of Hannibal's demise. “He’s been your loyal servant for so long, put himself on the line for you over and over again and this is where you finish up – this is what you have driven him to; Will Shakespeare would have been proud to have penned such a tale of loyalty and betrayal.” He laughs, low and bitter. “Where is your legendary cunning now, then, Smith? Where’s the plan? Where’s the back door?” He waits, and Hannibal is silent – there’s nothing he can say, his words are stolen by Face’s expression, the cold pain, the resignation and Yusef is right – he has nothing. “The legendary Hannibal Smith, broken, finished, alone. I’m glad I’m around to see it happen, to make it happen. To see you as the sad old man that you are, a poor excuse for the leader you’ve always claimed to be.”
The words are cutting but they’re nothing to the silent acceptance from Face

“He tells me you were lovers,” Yusef’s voice drips salaciously over that word and Hannibal jerks, his stomach twisting in horrified shock at that particular betrayal. “Well, you don’t have to worry about that particular need of his going unfulfilled, Colonel, I can satisfy him there just like I can satisfy every one of his other desires. He’s quite the asset to my team, you know, he has the skills, the drive, the determination to do well. And he knows what he wants, what he needs, and right now, what this boy of mine needs is his revenge.”

Hannibal’s heart starts to beat hard against his chest as Face steps forward and, at Yusef’s nod, an implacable lackey reaches over and passes him an MP7 fully automatic machine pistol. He watches, mouth dry, as Face checks it over, slides the safety off and looks to Yusef who smiles at him, a smile full of ownership, before nodding. “Be my guest.”

“Thank you, sir,” and it’s that, that submissiveness from Face that really terrifies Hannibal, frightens him so damn much he can’t breathe. This is the end for him, but what is it for Face? Just the start? Of serving Yusef? Of being the man’s fucking whore? God, no, his boy is worth more than that, so, so much more than that! What has Hannibal driven him to?

“Face…”

“Shut the fuck up, Smith.”

Face has stepped forward again and lifted his arm, his aim steady as the weapon points unerringly at Hannibal’s forehead.

“Don’t let him do this to you.”

“This isn’t him. This is all me.”

“I know that, I know, and I don’t mean me, forget about me-”

“I intend to.”
That hurts, but Hannibal pushes it all down, “I mean you. Don’t let this be your life, kid, don’t, please don’t. I’m begging you – and I’m sorry, so fucking sorry.”

For a moment, something flickers in Face’s eyes and Hannibal has a flash of hope but then it’s all gone again, the cold, indifferent mask is there once more.

“Waste him, kid,” the glee is evident in Yusef’s voice and Face’s posture sharpens, his weight shifts to the balls of his feet and, despite himself, Hannibal’s eyes slide closed – never in all their years of ups and downs had Hannibal ever thought that this would be the way it all ended.

The gunfire starts up at that, but Hannibal doesn’t feel anything, doesn’t feel the pain or the nothingness of the end. He hears shouting though, short and desperate and more gunfire until he opens his eyes to a room of death, Face standing in front of him, eyes wide and shocky and the truth slams home like a wrecking ball; oh, sweet Jesus, just what has he forced his incredible boy to do?

“Face!” he barks out that name, throat tight with emotion and Face turns to him, blank and empty, the blood of his victims splattered up his expensive suit. “Face, baby, listen to me…”

“I had no choice,” Face is shaking now, the pistol slipping from his fingers. “I had to stop you. I couldn’t go on, we couldn’t, we just couldn’t…”

“I know, Face, sweetheart, I know and I’m so sorry,” he is, he’s never felt sorrow like it, not ever. How could he have let things get to this point? How could he have ignored the wishes of his love for so long? How could have pushed the man he loves so far? “But we need to leave now,” the pistol hadn’t been silenced and he doesn’t know Yusef’s organisation well enough to know if the people who’ve been spared this massacre will be saluting Face or hunting him down. “You need to untie me.”

Face stumbles forward, a knife from his boot slicing Hannibal’s bonds and Hannibal just grabs him, notes the leather gloves the kid is wearing and leaves the pistol in all the blood. He holds him close as they flee, down the service elevator, out into the winter sunshine, straight down into the subway, Face’s eyes wide, his body trembling, his silence worrying. They pause long enough to collect Murdock and BA and keep running, state to state, Mexico to Cuba, Cuba to Aruba, Aruba to Venezuela, Suriname, Brazil and finally Argentina and a villa on the hillside where Hannibal gets the phone call he’s been praying for.

“Yes?” he listens intently as he watches Face standing on the huge balcony outside as Murdock and
BA splash in the pool below him. “Thank fuck for that... You’re absolutely sure? And there’s nothing to place Face anywhere near that whole organisation?” he nods and wipes at the cold sweat on his brow. “Thank God, yeah... I will. I will, Amy, I swear it – I know I’ve fucked this up. I will,” he listens again and frowns, “What the hell date is it?” he closes his eyes, “Yeah, that too and thank you, thanks so much, you have no idea how much I appreciate all this. Happy holidays to you too, kiddo, take care, we’ll talk soon. Okay, bye.”

He hangs up and sags against the back of the couch and watches Face as the wind lifts the curls in his hair feeling the love he has for this man swirl and pulse within him. How could he have been so stupid? How could he have risked it all and forced Face into such drastic action? And more pressing, how could he ever start to put it all right again?

He starts with some phone calls, dishing his American Express like there’s no tomorrow before wandering out to where his love stands on the balcony and wonders if he still is Hannibal’s love.

“So, Amy called,” he notes the flicker of fear he sees in that beloved face and quickly presses on. “NYPD and the FBI have concluded that Yusef and his men were killed by a rival gang, probably one from outta town or even out of the country, drugs dispute, that type of thing. They’ve drawn a line under the whole incident, the remaining roaches are all running scared blaming each other and climbing over each other in their eagerness to tell all to the cops before the avenging angel comes for them too. The papers are calling it a blessing, kid, they’re full of stories of the ways people’s lives have turned around in the days since Yusef’s empire collapsed.”

“Since I killed them all,” Face is quiet still, he’s never liked the killing but never seemed to have had this much trouble rationalising it before. Hannibal wants to hold him but doesn’t quite dare, doesn’t know if he’s got that right any more.

Instead he blows out a long breath. “You did kill them, but you know it was the only way, they were cancer, they were death themselves.”

Face’s eyes are still on the distant ocean, “You always said no killing, last resort only. I understand that you’re disappointed in me, but I couldn’t think of another way to free you of your obsession with bringing Yusef down and it was killing us all. I just couldn’t think of another way.”

Hannibal is speechless, after everything that’s happened, this is what Face thinks? He can’t keep his distance anymore and he steps in, gathers Face’s taut body against his own and holds him so tightly he doesn’t think he’ll ever be able to let go again. “Oh, baby…” he’s let his boy down so badly, “I don’t think that. Disappointed in you? Never. Never, never, never. You’ve saved me, so many times before but never like this. I was wrong, I was obsessed, I was too used to having you around, stopped listening to you, stopped seeing you.”
“Stopped loving me?”

“God, never!”

“I never stopped loving you either, that’s why I did what I did. I had to get through to you, I had to make you see what you were doing, I had to stop you before you ruined everything.”

“I know,” Hannibal has tears sliding down his cheeks now and he just holds Face even tighter as the other man slips into silence once more, but he’s holding back, at least he’s holding back and Hannibal thinks that that might mean they can save this love between them.

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Three days later…

It’s late at night, the cicadas are chirping outside, and Face is sleeping in Hannibal's arms and it’s the end of a very emotional, but very good, Christmas Day.

It’s amazing what the power of the dollar can do. It got BA and Murdock back to Chicago in time for the holidays once they found out they weren’t being hunted by the New York mobs and it got Hannibal and Face a villa full of lights and trees and food and drink and peace in order to discover each other once more.

There’s been plenty of tears and talking, some shouting and lots of holding each other. Face wept when Hannibal told him how absolutely proud he was of the way he’d pulled Hannibal from his destructive funk, and Hannibal wept when Face revealed that Yusef had never touched him, that the crime boss had been persuaded to wait until Hannibal had been killed before staking his own claim on Face's body.

They made love for the first time in months, in front of the tree in the main room, out by the pool as the moon shone above them and in this huge bed with the view right down to the sea and now Face is sleeping, the lines of stress gone from his expression as he lays on Hannibal's bare stomach, one of Hannibal's big hands gently stroking through his hair.
He stirs after an hour or so and sits up, smiling as he finds Hannibal watching over him still and Hannibal’s heart jumps a little at the love he can see in that smile.

“I’ve not always been good for you, have I?” the words are out of his mouth without preamble and Face’s smile wavers a little, his eyes flicking down to the hard belly, maybe not quite as flat as it had once been, that he’d been sleeping on. It’s nothing that Hannibal hasn’t already said over the course of their time in this villa, but he wants to make sure that Face knows exactly where he stands, exactly how important he is; it’s vital if Hannibal's new plan is to come off. “You’ve always been there for me, you’ve always followed me, believed in me, defended me – your loyalty has known no bounds.” Face doesn’t move, doesn’t speak. “Even when I’ve taken you for granted. Even when I’ve disregarded your feelings and your worries. Even when I absolutely haven’t deserved you,” he wonders if Face is blushing, he’s certainly not denying any of it and why should he? It’s taken Hannibal too long to recognise what was, all too often, Face’s reality.

“And now, well, I need… I need you to see how important you are to me, how much I love you and treasure you,” he takes a breath, gathers his courage, “Let’s get married.”

Face’s eyes jump back up, just as Hannibal's hand moves to cup the side of his face and for a moment Face is still, his eyes wary, his expression closed. “Married?” the shock in that one word is heart-breaking, as is the way that Face is watching him, waiting for the laughter, the teasing, the withdrawal, but those days are gone.

“Married,” Hannibal affirms. “I love you so much, I want to spend every minute of the rest of my life with you, will you marry me, my darling boy? Will you?”

Face doesn’t answer, not with words, but he does sit up and swing his leg over Hannibal’s thighs, trapping their cocks together as he pins Hannibal to the bed and, wreathed in the twinkling lights of the Christmas tree, like the angel he is, kisses him breathless.

Hannibal figures this is his ‘yes’ and kisses him back, knowing that this time he’ll get it all right, this time he’ll be what Face deserves.

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